

Those Things Still to Come

I Corinthians 15:24-26

Eschatology is the study of last things. Christians have disagreed over “last things.” These disagreements should not be a fellowship issue because it is not a salvation issue. Christians should be able to love each other and fellowship with one another despite our various and differing viewpoints about end-times.

So why is the study of eschatology important?

I. One’s eschatology of the end-time gives rise to one’s philosophy of the present time.

Our understanding of how we live our lives is greatly influenced by what we believe about end-times. There are two words that portray the viewpoints of Christians when it comes to Biblical prophecies.

A. Futurism – the prophecies that are read in the Bible are events that are still future in fulfillment.

B. Preterism – a Latin word that means “past”; thus, a belief that prophecies *have been fulfilled*.

Every Christian is a partial futurist and a partial preterist. All would agree that some prophecies have “already been fulfilled” (ex. “the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem” Micah 5:2) and all would agree that some prophecies have not yet been fulfilled (“it is appointed unto men once to die” Hebrews 9:27). Do you believe most prophecies are fulfilled? (I say you’re preterist). Do you say “most” biblical prophecies are yet to be fulfilled? (I say you are a futurist). But there are others who make the distinction between “partial preterism” and “full preterism” and say a partial preterist (like I am) are in actuality futurists. The disagreement is over where to draw the line.

II. Those who identify as “full preterists” say that every Bible prophecy has already been fulfilled.

“Full preterism” teaches that there won’t be any final bodily return of Christ, a final resurrection, or a final judgment at the end of the Kingdom age, with the establishment of an eternal home (heaven). Full preterism teaches death and Hades were done away with at AD 70 when the death that reigned over man (Rom.5:14) was reversed by the eternal “life” provided through Christ (Romans 5:17,21). The general resurrection occurred in AD 70 and “death and hell (the grave) were cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:10). At AD 70 resurrection, say the full preterists, souls in Hades were raised out of their waiting state and the righteous into the presence of Christ in His kingdom. Full preterists vary on the “punishment” of the wicked. Some are universalists; some hold to conditional immortality.

III. I am a partial preterist (futurist) who believes there are three things still “to come.”

I hold to a literal coming to earth (again) in a physical, material Kingdom He establishes on earth; a future *bodily resurrection* of the dead, a final judgment, the bestowal of an inheritance (Matt. 5:5). I am opposed to dispensationalism and believe Christ’s Kingdom has already been inaugurated and will one day be consummated (e.g., “already/not yet”) and we are now a Kingdom people looking for a city that is coming, a city not built with human hands (Heb. 11:10). Let’s look at each future event.

A. A Kingdom consummated on earth – John 5:28-29; I Cor. 15:20-28; Matthew 5:5; II Pet. 3:8-13.

B. A general resurrection and judgment – Romans 12:19-20; Matt. 25:31-46; Psalm 1:5; 2 Cor. 5:10.

C. The bestowal of an inheritance – Matthew 5:5; Romans 8:17; Isaiah 45:17; Eph. 2:7; Rev. 21.

The important theological concept of the Already/Not Yet principle of kingdom inauguration is presented in the book. This principle is essential for sorting through some of the thorny issues in eschatology. Has God saved you? Yes! So what’s in your future? God tells us clearly through Paul: “So that in *the ages to come* He might show you the surpassing riches of His kindness” (Eph. 2:7).